



GEORGE STREET UNITED CHURCH



25 Buchanan Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 0A4

***Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it."
So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked,
"Do you understand what you are reading?" He replied, "How can I, unless
someone guides me?"***

--Acts 8: 29-31

4 June 2020

To the Scattered Saints of the George Street Pastoral Charge:

Grace and peace to you in the midst of your isolation.

One of the fascinating bits of the book of Acts, for me, is the way that the newly fledged Christian community engages in a whole new translation of their Holy Scriptures. How Jesus becomes a Rosetta Stone, unlocking new meaning from ancient texts.

This is helpful for us as we forge our way in a world which looks familiar but is now using new language. What a time to be the Church, particularly a Community of Faith in a newly reorganized United Church and a recently reorganized congregation of The United Church of Canada!

One of our ongoing issues will be the "lost in translation" dynamic. With a new language to learn, we will become increasingly concerned that all of the old and necessary work is not being done. I cut my teeth on the language of Presbytery and Conference, came to Newfoundland and Labrador as a green ordinand and had to drop all references to Presbytery because here, in NL Conference, we referred to Districts. Which became difficult for me when moving back to Ontario for Presbyteries again and then back to NL where we changed up Presbytery / District and Conference for Regions. Now, here at George Street, I have to go from the language of Official Board / Session Model to Modified Mission Team Model.

Learning a new language is hard stuff. Not only do we struggle with using the right words at the right time, we also struggle trying to understand just who is



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now responsible for what and whether or not we are still doing all the things we are supposed to be doing. We had plans in place to help with our transition to this new language. Those plans did not take a global pandemic into account so we are a bit slow with our translation efforts.

At this point I am going to ask you to trust in the members of the Modified Mission Team (Official Board) that you have elected. They are continuing to do the work that needs doing even as they struggle with the new language themselves. We haven't lost the Session (Spiritual Leadership Team) so much as we have reorganized and re-labelled it. All that work will be done, though we still need to repopulate components of the Spiritual Leadership Team.

I know, in unguarded moments, that I slip back into the old language of being and doing the Church (Community of Faith) and that is to be expected—and can be—a source of levity. In the weeks to come I hope to use the Pastoral Letters to facilitate language lessons that will help us to become more comfortable using our new language while we transition from our older language.

If we can spend some deliberate time working on grasping our new model and new language we will be somewhat further ahead when it comes time for us to reconvene.

In closing, I remind you that when humanity thought itself equal to God, that God decided to introduce different languages to humble humanity. And when the Kingdom of God was beginning to be made manifest in the world, the Spirit came with the gift of tongues so that we could all talk to one another with greater ease. I expect we feel a bit more of the former now than the latter. With the grace of God, we will find ourselves able to understand all this newness better. I hope you will join me in attempting to learn new ways to say and do old things.

Your Servant in Christ Jesus,

Reverend John Maich